

New York Feb. 21st 1843

To the Board of the Massachusetts Anti Slavery Society

James S Gibbons has replied to a letter from Mr. Philbrick; but it seems to me necessary to enter into a little more full explanation of our condition, and of our relation to you.

When I took the Standard, it was deeply involved in debt; I think more so than it now is; at any event, the embarrassment was great. My own views of doing business are always to choose safe ground, however narrow. This policy I urged upon the committee, and their own experience made them well disposed to adopt it. I knew there would be an outcry that we were doing nothing; but I did not think we had a right to violate principles of honesty, in order to make a great display; a thing which associations, in their unthinking zeal, are very apt to do.

We arranged everything on a safe and economical scale. Our receipts exceeded our expenditures. Every month we paid all our current expenses, and considerable of our old debts. Each month the debt dwindled more and more, until we owed of the old load only \$800, and all present expenses were promptly met. In this prosperous state of things,

we received an urgent request from the Massachusetts Board to appoint John A. Collins General Agent, with a view to enlarging our sphere of operations. I dreaded this, because I knew we had not the means of extending our circle of agitation, and I had not faith that we could obtain the means, in the present state of the anti-slavery cause. James S. Gibbons had the same feeling; but much as he had been embarrassed and perplexed by the pecuniary condition of the society, he, like myself, felt an extreme reluctance to oppose our judgment to that of the good friends of the cause in Massachusetts. We acquiesced, with foreboding hearts; and from that day to this, we have been getting deeper and deeper into debt. We are now over \$2,000 in debt, and our monthly receipts about half meet our expenses.

This pecuniary result cannot be owing to the management of the Standard, either editorially, or financially. We have made no increase in wages or salaries. An addition of \$300 (making our salary \$1,500 per annum) was voted to Mr. Child and myself; but we declined to accept it; and when I see Mr. Child, I presume that he will agree not to take more than \$1,000. The subscription

to the Standard is larger, now than it was the year we were so rapidly freeing ourselves from embarrassments; ^{larger than it has been at any period;} being now about 5000. If we had gone on the cautious system, we should by this time have been out of debt, and had a little stock in trade, whereby we could gradually enlarge our operations. But this was too slow a process to meet your approbation. Merely getting out of debt, and preparing to do something, seemed to you to be doing nothing. You urged us to a different policy. We find ourselves over head and ears in difficulty; scarcely able to pay our printers a weekly allowance to save their children from hunger; buying paper of one man, till we are so deeply in debt that he will let us have no more, and then getting more of another man, with the same result; dunned by our landlord for rent; sniffed at by S. W. Bone-diet, the new organizationist, because we cannot pay him what we owe. Of our own discouragement, mortified, and insulted feelings, I say nothing - because we neither of us deem them of sufficient consequence to talk about. In this distress, we are promised money from Massachusetts; week after week, the promise comes, but the money does not come. We repeat the promise to landlord, printer, and paper-maker, till we blush to repeat it again, and are obliged to confess that the Ameri-

⁴ - can Society has no credit, and her word is not worth a farthing. In all this, we care more for the effect on the cause, than we do on ourselves. At last, in desperate extremity, we renew our appeals to you; and instead of the promised \$2,000, receive a letter from Mr. Philbrick in the coolest style of finance, inquiring how much we owe, and what we owe it for; and advising us to call upon Pennsylvania for help, and to recall our agents. We might as well call upon a dead dog, as upon Pennsylvania, so far as money is concerned. As for our agents, there is no use in recalling them, for they have eaten up our yearly resources. They are not to blame, poor fellows! They have been diligent, economical, and self-sacrificing. But they must eat, and they must be conveyed about from place to place; and subscriptions to the Standard constituted nearly the whole they received to defray expenses. That they have aroused a great deal of anti slavery feeling, where it was heretofore dormant, I doubt not; but we have no right to starve our printers and press men, even to do good. Moreover, two thirds of the anti slavery zeal, thus awakened, goes to the benefit of Liberty Party; and is therefore suicidal to the American Society, instead of benefiting it. Conventions have been held in rapid succession; they are expensive machinery; and our farmers and

mechanics, who give a certain annual sum for the advancement of anti-slavery, if they give it in one way, do not give it in another.

In all this, do not understand me as blaming John A. Collins. The cause has not a more disinterested laborer; and I believe he has done zealously, what his sanguine temperament considered for the best. But he was a great trader, without capital. The American Society cannot possibly do more than to sustain a paper, and keep an office open, without perpetually incurring debt. It is not honest for us to attempt to do more.

I attach blame to no one. All have done what they thought was for the best. But you advised us into this scheme of large adventure, against our own judgment; and I now put it to your consciences, whether you ought to leave us in the lurch, and turn a starving horse into the stony stubble-field of Pennsylvanian generosity. Either the American Society is worth supporting, or it is not worth supporting. If not worth supporting, you should have been more sparing of promises.

I write with perfect freedom in this matter, because

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I have nothing at stake. Personally, it is of no consequence to me, whether the Standard exists another week. If I looked at it in a selfish point of view, I should rejoice at its downfall, as a means of ridding myself more speedily of a disagreeable burden. Whether things can be so arranged, as to still continue it a useful instrumentality to the cause, it is for the Society to determine. But it is not fair for any association to place a Committee in the situation in which we have been placed for the last year; and no person of principle, or the least pride of character, can consent to remain in it.

If I have spoken bluntly, my excuse must be, that our emergencies are pressing, and our burden of debt grows absolutely intolerable.

Respectfully,

L. Maria Child.

P. S. It may be well to remark, that of the receipts acknowledged in the Standard, a large proportion are never received by us, but used by the agents, and added to them. The apparent amount of our receipts has deceived many of our friends.